

**NETWORKING
FOR ROCK ART**
Global Challenges,
Local Solutions



Edited by
Neville Agnew
Janette Deacon
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THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE

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LOS ANGELES

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The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) works internationally to advance conservation practice in the visual arts—broadly interpreted to include objects, collections, architecture, and sites. It serves the conservation community through scientific research, education and training, field projects, and the dissemination of information. In all its endeavors, the GCI creates and delivers knowledge that contributes to the conservation of the world’s cultural heritage.

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Cover images:

Top: Painted Rock, a horseshoe-shaped sandstone feature in central California’s Carrizo Plain, features numerous paintings on the walls of its interior. Its paintings have suffered greatly from disrespectful visitors, primarily in the first half of the twentieth century. Painted Rock was the focus of an on-site training course for rock art conservation, organized by Getty Conservation Institute, in 1991. See Chapter 3.1 for more information. Image: Tom McClintock.

Middle Right: The Cave of Altamira outside Santillana del Mar, Spain, was discovered in 1868. After decades of heavy visitation, authorities recognized the cave’s delicate climate was being impacted to the detriment of the paintings’ preservation. It was closed to the public in 1977 and a replica (pictured) was built for visitors, which opened in 2001. See Chapter 4.2 for more information. Image: Tom McClintock.

Bottom: The White Shaman Mural is one of the best preserved and most narratively elaborate paintings in North America. Located in the Lower Pecos River Region of southwest Texas, the site is currently managed by the Witte Museum in San Antonio. See Chapter 3.3 for more information on the rock art of the Lower Pecos. Image: Tom McClintock.

Middle Left: The Chauvet-Pont d’Arc Cave was closed immediately following its discovery in 1994, a decision that was based on the impacts observed at other sites like Altamira and Lascaux. At the time of discovery, the paintings yielded some of the earliest known radiocarbon dates for rock art, roughly 32,000 years old. A facsimile of the cave and its paintings was opened to the public in 2015. Pictured here is the replica of the “grand panneau des Points-Paumes,” nearly one hundred ochre palm prints evoking the shape of a bison. See Chapters 2.4, 4.1, and 4.7 for more information. Image: Tom McClintock.

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5.2 Rock Art in South American Landscapes under Anthropocene Threats

María Isabel Hernández Llosas

The Human Landscapes

Landscapes, by definition (Crumley 2003; Marquardt and Crumley 1987), are the result of long-term human/environment interactions within particular places. Through time, those places have experienced changes and/or continuities, resulting in their present forms. Present landscapes show traces of all the physical and cognitive features which shaped and define them as unique and distinct places in the world.

Across the world, landscapes have been inscribed with rock art, which is, as its name points out, art created using bedrock, detached rocks spread out on a field, outcrops (walls, shelters, caves), and the surface of the Earth itself as natural canvas. South America is no exception, with thousands of rock art sites spread across the continent (fig. 5.5).

Through time, subsequent generations of people have inscribed the land with rock art for purposes as diverse as initiation practices, territorial demarcations, trail markers, and signs to secure power by hegemonic groups, among many others, and the places chosen were intentionally selected to stamp images on them for those specific reasons. In so doing, humans were creating landscapes through rock art because these images, implanted on natural surfaces, transform the land physically and cognitively. The presence of art on the bare natural surfaces is an indication of social significance and special engagements with places. These engagements, consequently, enhance people's relationships with particular pieces of land, producing and promoting a sense of place and belonging (Bradley 2001), something that can endure many generations and may persist until the present day.

These material and immaterial traces of the interrelationships between places, events, and people are still in landscapes and can be revealed by different means. Local/indigenous knowledge systems (UNESCO 2002) are one of the most relevant ones because they link past and present through continuing cultural practices. These practices are sometimes

FIGURE 5.5.
Rock art motifs from
Cuchimachay Cave, Peru.
Image: © Rainer Hostnig.



still alive in the minds of local people who cherish and pass on the knowledge encrypted in that landscape to younger generations to keep the memory of the place ongoing (e.g., Uluru–Kata Tjuta Board of Management 2021). i

The Anthropocene and the impacts of Colonial Expansions on Landscapes

In regions of the world that have been colonized through history, this is a particularly sensitive topic because the colonial powers have tried to erase those long-term memories in favor of narratives that give them ideological advantages to subdue the colonized territories, not only physically but also symbolically. It is known that the major impulse of colonial expansion was carried out by Western empires in three waves (Wallerstein 1974, 2011). The first wave occurred between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries when different European expansive kingdoms annexed the so-called overseas territories, located far away from the central power, imposing on them political, economic, and cultural rules under strict control. The second wave took place between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under a different format: changing the methods from direct political domination to economic and underlying interference at economic, political, social, and cultural aspects of the former colonies. The third wave began in the mid-twentieth century and is ongoing, escalating that kind of neocolonialist domination which favors the central powers and their interests. During these three waves a world economic system was developed, reconfiguring the social geography on a planetary scale and generating what has been described as core, periphery, semi-periphery, and external areas with different access to natural resources and cultural independency, producing and maintaining inequalities within and between nations and societies globally (ibid).

Even if the human/environment interaction has always been a force shaping landscapes, until 500 years ago the scale of that interaction was smaller and regional. With the Western expansion and the imposition of the world economic system on the entire Earth system, a major and harmful human impact on the environment is occurring. The result is a massive socio-ecological crisis visible in climate change (global warming) and unwise land use (extractive and exhausting resources) that is endangering the planetary biota (accelerated loss of biodiversity, producing the sixth major extinction in Earth's history) (fig. 5.6). Humankind, under this scenario, became a globally distributed super predator (IHOPE

FIGURE 5.6.
The view from a shelter
Quelloacirca, Peru, where
landscape damage from
mining is visible.
Image: © Rainer Hostnig.



2021). In terms of the socio-cultural impacts, the consequences can be seen in a rapid loss of cultural diversity (homogenization in favor of the hegemonic world views) by lessening local social memory and regional identities, confronting traditional ways of connections with the land, and challenging long-established perceptions of landscape by endangering senses of place. This dangerous, ongoing socio-environmental situation at a planetary scale was defined as Anthropocene (University of Leicester 2016).

The place of South American landscapes in the global scenario

South America, with a long history of colonial domination since the first wave, has been under the pressures caused by the World Economic System and, therefore, exposed to all the threats the Anthropocene implies. The negative impacts on the natural environments together with intense harassment to long-term developed cultures has been intensively disrupting the local landscapes in every aspect. From the highlands of the Andes, threatened by mega mining enterprises, to the lowland jungles endangered by rapid deforestation due to uncontrolled large agro-business and cattle industry, there has been a massive change in land use that is pushing local/indigenous communities out of their traditional territories, sometimes even with mass killings against them.

Rock art, one of the most precious traces of long-term human/environment interactions and an “archaeological signature” that refers to material and symbolic expressions of the past and present people, is another victim of the World Economic System and the consequences of the Anthropocene. All along the continent there are treasures in danger like the geoglyphs in desert coastal of Peru and Chile (Nazca, Atacama), caves and shelters all along the Cordillera de los Andes (Toquepala and Lauricocha in Peru, Cuevas del valle de Cochabamba in Bolivia, Cueva de las Manos in Argentina.), caves and open air sites in the lowlands (Serrania de La Lindosa in Colombia, Sierra de Capivara in Brazil), just to mention a few of them.

Even though some of them are under some sort of protection (having been incorporated into national or local parks or placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List) all of them are under pressure and in danger. The lack of consciousness and actual preservation measures from politicians and local administrative authorities, together with the poor information the general public has on this topic and the expanding pressures of economic interest on the lands where the sites are placed, present a discouraging scenario.

Considering such cultural treasures, it is necessary to increase awareness of their importance through a massive dissemination of their relevance. This can be done through different media targeted to an international general public, increasing education in schools about this topic, providing technical and scientific advice to administrative authorities who manage the sites, and promoting the implementation of realistic strategies with master management plans. Hopefully, this will help protect and save some of this unique legacy.

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